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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 8385
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ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 013750

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 1/26/20
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#) [FR](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: READOUT OF JANUARY 20 U.S.-FRANCE STRATEGIC DIALOGUE
IN WASHINGTON

Classified By: Under Secretary Bill Burns for reasons 1.4(b,
d).

11. (S/NF) Summary. On January 20, 2010, Under Secretary Bill Burns and Defense Under Secretary for Policy Michele Flournoy hosted the third U.S.-France Strategic Dialogue with counterparts Jacques Audibert and Michel Miraillet. Discussions focused on Afghanistan, Pakistan, NATO Reform, Missile Defense, Turkey, Russia, Iran, and the Middle East Peace Process. The French indicated an announcement of further civilian contributions to Afghanistan would be made at the London Conference, but hedged on a decision regarding additional combat troops. On NATO's new Strategic Concept, the French highlighted the potential for a split in the Alliance between old and new members, and agreed that a document that linked to NATO reform measures was needed. The French requested more information on the U.S. proposal to make Missile Defense a mission for NATO. Both U/S Burns and USD(P) Flournoy underscored that the potential sale of a French Mistral-class Helicopter carrier to Russia would be unhelpful in terms of regional stability. Next steps on Iran were discussed with the French agreeing that the European Union (EU) was more unified than ever on the need for increased pressure and welcoming U.S. efforts to engage the EU as a whole on this issue. End Summary.

AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

12. (S/NF) U/S Burns praised the French contributions and previewed U.S. goals for the London Conference on Afghanistan, which included agreement on growing the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), reintegration, and choosing a new UN Senior Representative for Afghanistan. USD(P) reviewed the POTUS decision and highlighted that July 11, 2011 was an inflection point -- the beginning of a process. She noted that POTUS was careful to not create an artificial timeline for transition to Afghan responsibility and that the U.S. message to the region is that "we are not leaving." Deputy SRAP Jones described the new U.S. regional stability strategy and our efforts to align Karzai with the international community's civilian priorities.

13. (S/NF) Audibert remarked on France's "special" commitment to Afghanistan based on France leading the invocation of NATO's Article 5 after 9/11. Nine years later, the French cite Allied unity as the mission's principal success. France believes the President's announcement of 30,000 more troops

substantively changed the operation. While the London conference is a chance to impress upon Afghan President Hamid Karzai that he must implement the commitments in his inauguration speech, the French are concerned it might be too early to put too much political pressure on Karzai. Audibert suggested a second international conference on Afghanistan in the spring would be helpful and was pleased to hear about plans for an April conference in Kabul. Audibert also stated that France will make an announcement about its "civilian surge" at the London conference, but that commitments on further troop deployments were not ready. Miraillet lamented French public opposition to the war in Afghanistan, but believed that the government was making progress in convincing the French people of the necessity for the operation. He also explained that the military staff had developed several plans for additional contributions, which were now with President Sarkozy for action.

NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT

¶4. (C/NF) Audibert noted that the Strategic Concept (SC) was "not a redrafting of the Washington Treaty," and should not open troublesome issues such as new missions and redefining Article 5. He further emphasized that France wanted to stay as close to the 1999 Strategic Concept as possible on language

STATE 00013750 002 OF 004

relating to NATO nuclear issues. Audibert highlighted the risk of a split between old and newer members of the Alliance on these questions and advocated for a short, simple document. The French want to use the Strategic Concept to drive reform at NATO. He noted that France had submitted several proposals on reform and that France was keen for U.S. support. Miraillet added that with the dire state of NATO financing, it was important to stress financial reform even before the drafting of the Strategic Concept. Miraillet also warned that SecGen Rasmussen might put a tight grip on drafting the concept and cautioned that Turkey would play a stronger role in drafting than in 1999.

¶5. (C/NF) USD(P) asserted that the U.S. has played a leading role in the Senior Officials Group (SOG) because of our strong commitment to NATO reform. On the SC, she said it was important that the key Allies make their input to the SecGen before pen was put to paper. Further, USD(P) clarified that the U.S. did not believe Alliance transformation could happen without financial reform and that it was a priority for the U.S. State Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Phil Gordon agreed; any misperception that the U.S. did not want to link the Strategic Concept to reform must be corrected. OSD Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs Alexander Vershbow added that the new concept must put a public face on the Alliance and address issues for the future, such as Article 4 and crisis management capacity. He agreed that reform of financing was critical as the current budget crisis evidenced. ASD Vershbow stressed that we must work with the UK to solve the financial crisis at NATO and suggested that the idea of "zero real growth" be put aside. Audibert was pleased to hear that the U.S. was on the same page as France regarding reform and that this was a priority goal for the French side during the Strategic Dialogue.

Missile Defense

¶6. (S/NF) USD(P) briefed the French on the current state of play regarding worldwide U.S. missile defense plans. She noted that the Ballistic Missile Defense Review (BMDR) would soon be submitted to Congress and noted the Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA) would be a U.S. contribution to a NATO Missile Defense project. This plan would protect both U.S. forces and interests in Europe and our NATO Allies. USD(P) requested French support for securing NATO approval for the Active

Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) program to become the Command and Control (C2) backbone of a wider European Missile Defense program. USD(P) stressed that NATO approval for the C2 relationship between ALTBMD and the PAA was important as Turkey was unlikely to approve participation unless it was part of a larger NATO enterprise.

17. (S/NF) Miraillet conveyed that France was pleased with the Obama administration's swift action on Missile Defense and welcomed the U.S. development of the PAA. France shared the U.S. perception of the threat and had ideas on ways it could participate in the U.S.-proposed system. However, Miraillet emphasized that France needed more information before the government could endorse a NATO-PAA linkage through ALTBMD, and argued that the Lisbon Summit may be too early for a NATO decision. He said that France wanted information on phases three and four of the PAA and whether the SM-3 Block 2B could be perceived as a threat by the Russians. Audibert added that France needed much more detail on the potential costs to NATO Allies before endorsing ALTBMD as the C2 for the European Missile Defense system. He also asked how the C2 relationships in the system would work in a NATO context. Audibert concluded by underscoring that French hesitation on accepting a NATO role for European-wide Missile Defense is not reluctance, but a reflection of the need for greater clarity on what was being proposed.

18. (S/NF) In response, USD(P) Flournoy said we would soon share additional details on C2 arrangements, noting that authorities would need to be delegated given the short decision time for a response. She and ASD Vershbow pressed the importance of a political decision at Lisbon to adopt territorial Missile Defense as a NATO mission, both to secure Turkish agreement to host the forward-based radar and to demonstrate that NATO was addressing real Article 5 threats.

STATE 00013750 003 OF 004

Turkey

19. (S/NF) Miraillet and Audibert were remarkably downbeat on Turkey and lamented poor French bilateral relations with Turkish leadership, though they believed ties were slowly improving. Miraillet believed the military leaders were no longer what they once were as the recent Ergenekon scandal had weakened the influence of the Generals in Turkish politics. Miraillet asserted that FM Ahmet Davutoglu had kept with his theory of "strategic depth," which he had described in his previously published books, through Turkey's continued engagement with neighbors like Syria and Iran and in Turkey's proactive approach to the Caucasus and recognition of the Iraqi Kurds. Miraillet, in noting that the Turkish military had of late established a better relationship with the Pakistani military, stated that Turkey was a nuclear threshold country and that France did not know if there were similar civilian nuclear cooperation linkages with Pakistan. In highlighting Turkey's unwillingness to engage in combat in Afghanistan, its improved relationships with Syria and Hamas, its willingness to negotiate with Iran outside the P5-plus-1 process, and its position on selecting a new NATO Secretary General at the April 2009 Strasbourg Summit, Miraillet summed up that Turkey was becoming more of a global actor, but not always a positive actor in the international system.

110. (S/NF) USD(P) asked whether the EU was closer to identifying a way that it could signal to Turkey that the door was open to a closer relationship, such as observer status in the European Defense Agency. Audibert noted that President Sarkozy had been particularly upset with the Turkish position on Rasmussen at Strasbourg and that Sarkozy's objection to Turkish membership in the EU was one of five pillars on his political campaign that the public still remembered. Further, when France tried to move forward with closer NATO-EU ties during its 2008 EU presidency, Turkey rejected every plan that

was put on the table. For these reasons, it would be difficult for France to see any opening on EU membership for Turkey in the near future. All French interlocutors agreed that a "more arrogant" Turkey could present a problem during NATO Strategic Concept discussions this year. In response, Flournoy, Vershbow and Gordon reiterated that by closing the door on the Turks, the EU was creating a vicious circle that fueled Turkish obstructionism at NATO.

Russia

¶11. (S/NF) Audibert began by stating that France was taking pragmatic approach to Russia, but that President Sarkozy had a "problem of confidence" and did not fully trust Russia. Audibert said Russia's two treaty proposals on new European Security Architecture were unacceptable and mere provocations, but that the French position was to use the proposals to engage the Russians on new approaches to crisis management, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, and on the adoption of the Open Skies/verification measures. However, he noted, these issues will continually be bogged down over the situation in Georgia, which Audibert saw as intractable as Russia will never "derecognize" the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia while also never recognizing Georgian sovereignty over its territory, including the two enclaves.

¶12. (S/NF) Audibert, noting he was raising his "if-raised" point, brought up the issue of France's potential sale of a helicopter carrier Mistral-class ship to Russia. He asserted that the French had merely agreed to negotiate with Russia on the potential sale, but then argued that sale would be only for the ship without armament systems. Audibert also said that while France understood U.S. concerns over the potential for Russia to use the ship for projection of power, it was important to note that any decision on the issue would, in the end, be political in nature. Miraillet stated that this sale would be a gesture of good will to Russia as France assessed the Russian Navy was in dire condition. In any case, concluded Miraillet, if France did not make the sale, the Netherlands and Spain would likely sell similar technology.

¶13. (S/NF) On Mistral, USD(P) observed the optics and policy behind the sale were perplexing as it would "fly in the face"

STATE 00013750 004 OF 004

of President Sarkozy's personal engagement on resolving the Georgia crisis in 2008. She asserted that this sale would send a confusing political signal to Russia as well as to other Europeans. U/S Burns concurred with USD(P), noting the sale would feed Georgia's fears and could lead to an arms race, increasing the chance of miscalculation by one or both sides. USD(P) concluded that while we understood that France wanted to actively engage Russia, the U.S. would prefer that France find a different confidence-building measure than a Mistral sale.

Iran

¶14. (S/NF) U/S Burns stated that the international community had reached a point where it had to begin looking for further consequences for Iran as the credibility of our efforts was at stake. U/S Burns noted that other actors were watching Western actions on Iran. He cautioned that moving China toward greater sanctions would not be easy, but that we need to continue engaging them.

¶15. (S/NF) Audibert noted that France was using every means possible to bring the EU together on Iran. He noted a recently EU Council decision to task Foreign Ministers with developing new ideas on the way forward with Iran. Briens stated that since the Iranian regime cracked down following the June 2009 elections, the EU was more solid as a block on

sanctions. In particular, Spain and Sweden, who were reluctant to support sanctions in the past, were more supportive because of recent gross human rights violations.

Middle East Peace Process

¶16. (S/NF) Audibert hailed U.S. efforts to reestablish peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. He asked pointedly where the U.S. saw the process in the next six months, and how to further involve Europe, especially regarding a possible settlement. Notably, the French did not advocate for a Middle East summit in Paris.

¶17. (U) Participants:

United States:

Department of State
William Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Phil Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs
Paul Jones, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan
Maureen Cormack, Director for Western Europe
Tamir Waser, Special Assistant to U/S Burns
Andrew Lorenz, Senior France Desk Officer

Department of Defense
Michele Flournoy, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Alexander Vershbow, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs
Jim Townsend, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy
Andrew Winternitz, Deputy Director for European Policy

France:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Jacques Audibert, Under Secretary for Political and Strategic Affairs
Martin Briens, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Nonproliferation
Nicolas Roche, Political Counselor, Embassy of France

Ministry of Defense
Michel Miraillet, Director for Strategic Affairs
Gen Gratien Maire, French Defense Attache to the U.S.
Gen Emmanuel de Romemont, Deputy Director for Disarmament and Proliferation
Col Cyrille Claver, Deputy Director for European and NATO Affairs
Col Frederic Pesme, Director for North America

18. This cable was cleared by U/S Burns and USD(P) Flournoy.
CLINTON